WORKSHOP'S FINEST

What to expect from the WF Magazine

ATC: Should Free-to-Play Players in TF2 Get Their Voices Back?

RN: Doors, doors, and too many DOORS!!!

Feature Showcase – "Workshop's Finest" Picks of April 2025

War Paint Importer Concept Design Document

A Proposal for Streamlined War Paint Submission & Curation

INAUGURAL/PILOT ISSUE | A TF2 NEXUS PUBLICATION—NOT AFFILIATED WITH VALVE SOFTWARE | APRIL 2025 ISSUE

THE SCOUT IS ONE OF THE NINE PLAYABLE CLASSES IN TEAM FORTRESS 2, RENOWNED FOR HIS EXCEPTIONAL SPEED, AGILITY, AND BRASH PERSONALITY. HAILING FROM BOSTON, HE EXCELS IN A HIT-AND-RUN PLAYSTYLE, MAKING HIM A FORMIDABLE OPPONENT IN CLOSE-QUARTERS COMBAT.

HE IS THE FASTEST CLASS IN THE GAME, WITH A BASE SPEED OF 133%. THE SCOUT IS UNIQUELY CAPABLE OF PERFORMING A DOUBLE JUMP, GRANTING HIM ENHANCED MOBILITY AND EVASIVE CAPABILITIES. ADDITIONALLY, HE CAN CAPTURE CONTROL POINTS AND PUSH PAYLOAD CARTS AT TWICE THE NORMAL RATE, MAKING HIM A VITAL ASSET IN OBJECTIVE-BASED GAMEPLAY.

WITH HIS UNMATCHED SPEED, NIMBLENESS, AND SPECIALIZED WEAPONRY, THE SCOUT IS A DYNAMIC AND CHALLENGING CLASS TO MASTER. HIS FAST-PACED, AGGRESSIVE PLAYSTYLE HAS MADE HIM ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR CLASSES TO MAIN IN TF2 SINCE THE GAME'S RELEASE IN 2007.

J_PEG

FEATURED SCOUT MAIN

1269.5 HOURS ON SCOUT

(As of writing this)

The Workshop's Finest (WF) Magazine is a monthly publication by the TF2 Nexus group, dedicated to showcasing the TF2 community's Workshop creations, recent TF2 news, guides, and player opinions. This non-profit publication is run entirely by volunteers from the TF2 Nexus team. We are not affiliated with Valve Software—this magazine is a community-driven project.

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What to expect from the WF Magazine

*By SimplyKat**

Greetings and thank you for reading the first and pilot issue of the Workshop's Finest (WF) Magazine, your monthly source for all things TF2—crafted by the community, for the community! This magazine is a passion project born from the heart of *TF2 Nexus*—a community of Team Fortress 2's workshop creators, players, and enthusiasts united by a shared love for the game. The WF Magazine is released monthly and serves as a celebration of creativity, collaboration, and the enduring spirit of the TF2 community.

While this magazine's theme revolves around the game's workshop scene, it also features other events or issues happening in the game and its community. Therefore, this magazine is not just for the workshop peeps but also to the regular TF2 player.

What You'll Find in Each Issue

Each issue is packed with a variety of features and contributions, both editorial and community-submitted. Here's a breakdown of the regular sections you can expect:

Editorials

The monthly editorial sets the tone for the issue. Expect thoughts from the editors, reflections on current TF2 happenings, and highlights of what's new or important to the community.

Special/Cover Feature

A central highlight of the issue—this could be a major interview, a spotlight on a renowned creator, a deep dive into a thematic update, a retrospective on legendary Workshop items, or anything TF2 related.

Feature Showcase – "Workshop's Finest" Picks

Handpicked by our team, this section presents the standout Workshop submissions of the month. These could include cosmetics, weapons, taunts, maps, or unusual effects that fit the game's core aesthetics and artstyle.

ATC – Ask The Community

This section is fueled by questions and the community's answers. Every month, we gather responses from players and creators, around a central theme or question. A platform for voices across the community to speak up. We gather responses via our Discord server and monthly community polls.

Opinions and Takes

A space for hot takes, personal essays, or debates about the state of TF2, the Workshop ecosystem, or even broader gaming-related topics. Contributors can express themselves freely—respectful disagreement is part of the fun.

Level Design Profiles

Mapping in TF2 is an art of its own. This section dives into the profiles of maps that have been put in the game—both official and community made.

Community Bulletin

A summary of notable happenings around the TF2 community: events, updates, community projects, collaborations, contests, or anything that stirs conversation or creativity in the community.

Random Notes

Think of it as our community message board. This section includes workshop tips, notes about the game, or fun facts

submitted by readers. Anything goes, as long as it's not weird or a lie.

The community-driven sections of the magazine (Answers to ATC, Opinions and Takes, and Random Notes) are submitted via the TF2 Nexus' Discord server.

Each part of the magazine sheds light to the different aspects of the TF2 Community, not just its workshop scene.

Want to Get Involved?

We're always on the lookout for contributors! Visit the TF2 Nexus Discord community to submit content or apply as a volunteer. Whether you're a writer, artist, Workshop creator, or just someone with a good idea, we'd love to hear from you.

Whether you're a Workshop veteran or a fresh-faced fan with big ideas, there's always a space for you in the WF Magazine. We hope that you have a great read!

—*SimplyKat**
Editor-in-chief, WF Magazine

War Paint Importer Concept Design Document

By KayEf, Jacov, and the *TF2 Painter's Workshop* Discord Community

War Paint creation for TF2 has made leaps and bounds in recent years, from improvements in texturework and thematically fitting concepts, to more complex advancements like custom-coding, UVs, and a more thorough understanding of how War Paints work in-game. These developments, however, have not come without setbacks. The biggest of which being the lack of official support for more advanced War Paint creation techniques.

Proper documentation on how Valve creates War Paints in-house would be a welcome resource for the community, but a greater step forward would be the addition of an entirely new importer. Hence, this document was created to showcase an importer mockup I've designed, with the assistance of fellow War Paint creator, Jacov, and the Painter's Workshop Discord. This document will discuss the various aspects of this importer, what each part does and the benefits of having an importer of this caliber.

Forewarning: this is merely a concept, nothing being shown has been coded or added in the game and is merely a presentation on what a possible War Paint importer would look like and how it would function.

The Workshop Publish Page with a newly added War Paints tab.

Ideally, adding a dedicated section and importer for War Paints would make a standardized process for War Paints possible. With this same logic, War Paints created using the importer would be given the same "*Gold Star Approval*" that cosmetics and taunts receive.

After clicking on the War Paint tab, you'd be taken to this:

A new page showing 2 boxes to choose from.

You will be taken to a prompt, allowing you to click on one of 2 options for creating/importing your War Paint. Each one is defined as so:

1. **Create War Paint:** *Used for creating a War Paint from scratch or through an existing base. This is essentially how we currently make War Paints, but with the added benefit of not being limited to work from only bases currently in-game.*
2. **Create UV Paint:** *Self-explanatory; instead of applying pre-made patterns onto established groups, you import a non-randomized UV texture onto the weapon(s) of your choice. It would still be in War Paint form, similar to Dragon Slayer, in how you apply it to a select few weapons instead of all 44. However, with the new importer comes the addition of being able to utilize all 44 weapons within a UV package.*

It should be noted that anything done in the importer should be automatically arranged into a designated folder somewhere in TF2's files (perhaps a "custom" folder for ease of access). Having the program automatically save all submissions with the same file paths and naming conventions would make it easier for Valve to preview and add them to the game.

Additionally, decoupling War Paint code from the proto_defs and turning it into a separate file of some kind would make the overall user experience much better.

With these differences in mind, let's proceed to the next panel that comes after you choose to create a War Paint instead of UV paint. These are the operation settings (UV option would skip this step and go directly to the texture application stage).

"Set up War Paint operation" section.

Operations are an important part of War Paint creation that are usually invisible to the average skin creator. Every skin (War Paint or UV) in the game has an associated operation that controls what is possible to make within the skin.

1. **Choose operation template:** *A drop down list that allows you to choose a pre-existing operation from the game files (there are a lot) or to make a clean custom operation template.*
2. **Team skins option:** *Option that controls whether the warpaint will have separate versions for Red and Blue teams.*
3. **Team stickers option:** *Same as above but for stickers. Team stickers don't currently exist within any of the operations, so this would be an addition on Valve's part.*
4. **Randomized stickers option:** *Option that allows stickers to have random variations (ie; Yeti Coated).*
5. **Inner wear option:** *Option that decides if the War Paint will wear to the default weapon albedo or to a custom texture.*
6. **Exposed albedo texture option:** *Option that allows the War Paint to have exposed weapon albedo (ie; Autumn Mk.II, Anodized Aloha).*
7. **Overall textures field:** *How many textures the War Paint will have.*
8. **Stickers field:** *How many stickers the War Paint will have.*
9. **Possible sticker variants field:** *If the "Randomized stickers" option is checked, this field will be active and control how many random variants the stickers will have.*
10. **Combination layers field:** *Field that specifies how many layers will have a secondary, multiplicative or additive layer applied to them (used for "gradient" effects; i.e. Macaw Masked).*
11. **Combination layer type:** *Dropdown menu that allows you to choose between the multiplicative and additive application methods of combination layers.*
12. **Import button:** *The way the operations are coded makes it impossible to fully translate them into a one-dimensional interface — they are just too complex for that. So the proposed importer concept just highlights baseline operation functions that an average skin creator would need. Consider this as a gateway for advanced custom War Paint creation that is editing the proto_defs code — something that advanced War Paint creators have to do now to access features that are not readily available to them.*
    The "Import" button allows importing said custom code instead of interacting with the options in the "Set up War Paint operation" window.
13. **Save button:** *Allows you to save your progress. This button will be*

present in most other windows that will come up next.

Same window but we choose a pre-existing operation this time.

1. **Choose operation template:** *Each pre-existing operation follows the same naming conventions. The name basically explains what the operation does. "one_sticker_three_texture_inner_wear", the operation that we chose here, has one possible sticker, three textures overall and supports inner wear. This is reflected in the options below the "Choose operation template" panel.*
   The options are grayed out because this is a pre-existing operation that can't be edited.
2. **Info tooltip:** *If you choose a pre-existing operation template, this tooltip will appear and explain how many War Paints in-game use this operation, as well as their names.*

After the operation part is finalized, we move to the creative part — the War Paint creation menu itself.

War paint creation proper.

1. **Item name field:** *Ditto. Skin's name is typed here.*
2. **Set textures panel:** *The panel that contains all textures that the War Paint uses (except stickers). Every texture slot has three buttons. The magnifying glass button opens the import dialogue that allows loading a texture from the computer. The notepad button opens the advanced options window for the respective texture (will be discussed later). The cross button removes the texture from the list of patterns.*
   As you can see on the image, the user can also choose the blood and dirt textures that will apply with wear. If none are chosen, then the default versions (paint_blood and paint_dirt) will be applied.
   The user can click on one of the textures to select it. It is highlighted with the filled circle element. Only one texture can be selected at a time. Non-selected textures use a hollow circle element. Selection allows you to apply the texture to a weapon (this will be explained later).

3. **Set stickers panel:** *Same as the "set textures" panel but for stickers. If no sticker support was added on the operation stage, then this panel will not have slots.*
4. **Viewport:** *Functions as the in-game War Paint preview tool for the most part. You can see the seed field on the bottom left, wear slider and team selectors on the right. Button in the upper right corner allows you to maximize the viewport.*
   This window also contains two new additions:
5. **Texture preview:** *Shows the preview of the highlighted texture or sticker.*
6. **View switch button:** *Switches between the model view and UV unwrap view in the viewport window. UV view is important for the sticker application because it allows for better precision.*
7. **Texture parameter fields:** *Contains changeable parameters that any texture would have. The «Group select» field allows input for parts of the weapon the textures will be applied to. However, textures may also be applied manually.*
8. **Weapon selection panel:** *Allows switching between weapons, and progress between them is automatically saved. Also contains the paint kit model and «All weapons» option that allows to set parameters for every weapon at once (said parameters are overwritten by options chosen per-weapon).*
9. **Groups panel:** *Every weapon (and the paint kit model) uses special group textures that determines how the textures are applied to the model. This dropdown menu allows you to choose one of the pre-existing group textures. Also contains an import button inside for custom group textures.*
10. **VMT panel:***Dropdown menu that allows you to choose one of the pre-existing VMT material files for the model. Also contains an import button inside for custom VMT files.*

Weapon selection menu in action. The shotgun is colored in various shades of red that represent the group texture currently used.

Same menu but for UV paints.

The variation of this menu for UV skins is largely the same, but lacks some options that the War Paint menu has. For one, a UV skin can only have one

texture (minus the custom blood and dirt textures). Parameter fields are not present (no textures to control), and no groups panel (there is only one texture that is applied directly to the model).
UV paints would have team skins option and support for randomized and team stickers.

Advanced texture options.

The notepad button near the every texture slot in the «set textures» panel opens up the advanced texture options window that allows further customization of the texture.
Similar to the «set textures» panel, the magnifying glass button brings up the import dialogue that allows for loading in a texture. The cross button deletes the texture.

1. **Texture preview:** *Shows the preview of the texture that is being edited.*
2. **Exposed albedo switch:** *Determines if the texture exposes the weapon albedo (if that was turned on during the operation setup).*
3. **Base texture option:** *Determines the base texture itself.*
4. **Blue team texture option:** *If the War Paint was set up to have team skins, this option will determine the blue team variant of the texture. The base texture, in turn, will be set as the red team variant.*
5. **Wear texture option:** *If the War Paint was set up to have inner wear, this option will determine what the base texture will be wearing to.*
6. **Combination texture option:** *Combination textures (i.e. textures that get added on top of another texture using additive or multiplicative application method, for example — gradients) go here.*

Advanced sticker options.

The advanced sticker options window is mostly the same as the texture options one. There is no «exposed albedo» option for obvious reasons. Weight 1 is the base sticker itself. Other «weight» options are the possible random variations that this particular sticker can have (if randomized stickers were enabled during the operation part). Fields determine the chance of every variation to generate.

Texture application visualized.

When a texture is selected, the user can then proceed to the viewport window and click on a weapon part to apply it. The texture will be applied to all weapon parts of the respective groups. Alternatively, users can fill the «group select» field to determine which parts should be textured, as mentioned above.
Weapon is red in this example to visualize the concept of group textures.

Sticker application visualized.

1. **Sticker application in the viewport:** *Unlike War Paint textures, stickers are applied in the free-form way. They can be freely dragged around the model of the weapon or UV. The dots around the sticker allow it to resize it. The sticker can also be rotated by placing the cursor slightly outside of one of the dots, in the same way it is done in many digital editing programs such as Photoshop.*
2. **View switch button:** *Switches between the model view and UV unwrap view in the viewport window as was already highlighted above. In this instance, it was switched to UV mode for the ease of sticker application.*
3. **Sticker parameter fields:** As is the case with the texture parameters, sticker parameters contain necessary changeable settings for any sticker — top left, top right and bottom left coordinates that determine the position of the sticker on the model. This is an alternative to applying textures by hand.

TF2 Painter's Workshop

WorkshopPainter

.gg/27aJQRy8q5

Cosmetics
APRIL 2025

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Epilogue Locks
Class: Scout
Item Slot: Headgear, Misc
Other: Certified Compatible, Smissmas, Sumer
By mc_labs15, DJ L3G3ND, pidialski

Commander's Eyepiece
Class: Soldier
Item Slot: Misc
Other: Certified Compatible, Summer
By Cheddar, Dreadnaught, and Kerpongle

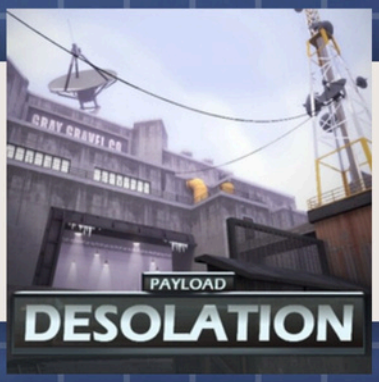
"Fire Guard" Set
Class: Pyro
Contains: Backdraft Blockers, Fire Guard Garb
By GetGrenade, Greg

"The Rejuvenator" Set
Class: Medic
Contains: Loose Ethics, Open Coar Surgery, and Der Wecker
By dotflare, Tabby, Hau

Maps
APRIL 2025

WORKSHOP'S FINEST
WORKSHOP PICKS

pl_Desolation
A Brutalistic styled TF2 map set in the snowy northern region by MayaMogus and Blade X64.



koth_Crumble
A classically themed KOTH map inspired by the original maps TF2 launched with back in 2007 by Bestest Bread.

arena_Marino
An Arena map that takes place in and around a mine in the middle of the Badlands by Seacat08

pd_Cortex
A PD Halloween map that takes place in a mad scientist's castle and a parallel dimension known as the mind zone by Seacat08

Taunts
APRIL 2025

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WORKSHOP PICKS

Yappin' Yankee

Class: Soldier

A looping taunt for Soldier that shows him on a podium, yapping—perfect for debates about why MILFs are better, especially on a 24/7 2Fort server.

By Kylul and Chickenman

Clueless Killer

Class: All Class

Just shrug it off... you don't even know how you killed 'em.

By Setry, Steaky, Endi

The Primary Instinct v2

Class: All Class

"A taunt for every class, and return tickets for Engineer, Soldier, and Medic's primary weapon, so they can finally show off their weapon that killed the freeze cam viewer..."

By Sanuki357

War Paints
APRIL 2025

WORKSHOP'S FINEST
WORKSHOP PICKS

Submarinal Air Strike

A yellow submarine themed war paint made of the Offshore Community Project that uses a Custom UV skin (a la Dragon Slayer) for the Air Strike.

By DudeTheNinja

Frontier Furnished (V2)

"A new and improved version of Frontier Furnished! Now featuring a fully custom war paint operation, utilizing group stickers to keep the team-colored stripes in place no matter the seed!" This war paint is also the very first featured workshop creation on the TF2 Nexus Twitter.

By KayEf and Dr. Bread

Leapfrog

frog

By dust, Dr. Bread, and ▲Auriee▲

Should Free-to-Play Players in TF2 Get Their Voices Back?

SINCE JUNE 2020, free-to-plays have been restricted from using basic abilities to communicate on Team Fortress 2's official servers. This restriction was implemented by VALVe in an attempt to combat the bot crisis plaguing TF2 at the time. However, the measure did little to prevent bots from flooding chat with absurd and discriminatory content as its hosters found ways to bypass the mute. Fast forward to today—the bots are gone, but the restrictions remain, leaving F2P players voiceless in a game built on teamwork. This issue made the community somewhat divided.

Some argue that the restriction should be lifted, giving new players a chance to fully engage with the game. Others believe the silence should be maintained, citing various concerns.

At *Workshop's Finest*, we reached out to a few members of the TF2 community to ask: Should F2P players get their voices back?

"yessiree they aint got no voice in bout 4 years we gotta give it back"

tyler tf2
Ordinary TF2 Player

"Absolutely. Team Fortress 2, ever since Valve decided to remove communication for free-to-play accounts, has been a pay-to-win game. Actively having a premium account gives you an infinitely diverse and huge advantage against those who do not. This directly goes against Team Fortress 2's core design philosophy of making sure all players have an equal standing at base, where the better player is decided by he who dedicates time and practise to perfecting his playstyle.

The decision to remove communication from free-to-play accounts to begin with was non-functional, and it's modern day existence in the game is simply a major, and unacceptable, oversight on Valve's end."

Lon'qudor
Content Creator

"The inhumane idea that people without money cannot be allowed the permission to speak is comparable to that of an eldritch abomination. All the humans of this Earth deserve the basic rights to speak, as detailed in the Constitution of America, regardless of anything. The reason this was added is because humanity is a very, VERY communication driven species. We thrive on the ability to express the complex or abstract, while also having the limitations to speak simple words of joy and meaning. Having to pay 5$ to have the right to speak is an abomination of this drive that humanity has. It is an abuse of wealth that sets a bar for those without communication to be harassed or insulted simply for the lack of money they have. It is not right to force people with no money or people who are not allowed to spend money on video games to pay, what is essentially, a *tax* just to speak.

...it is wrong that we are limiting Free speech for money, and it is best that we learn from this and grow as a community by giving the Free-to-Plays their voice back, and the unfortunate their speech. For whom amongst us can say for truth that they could live in silence of words?"

Captain Sandvich II
Ordinary TF2 Player

"In my opinion F2P players should be given a way to speak up, but let me explain myself. Since the new and old F2P player's experience is clearly being interfered with the fact that they can't even call for a Medic, or to let their teammates that there's a Spy. I strongly believe that Valve should give back a feature that the game was born with from day 1. What's the point of playing "TEAM Fortress 2" if you can interact with the team? Basically, F2Ps should be able to use all the voice commands available in the game. Now, in case cheaters happen to think of using this to spam and be annoying, the company that made this wonderful game can take care of this by putting a cool down. Just like that.

Now, why not giving them their voices back? I do wish Valve let the F2Ps talk again in both voice and text chat, but there's a problem. Bot hosters. Sadly it's been known that if Valve takes the decision of letting the F2P accounts to speak, bots will rampage against official servers mic spamming and using all the brute force they have with the mere intention of ruining the game once again. Sadly it's not safe to let the F2P player communicate again with their own voice until the company that made the game stops the real and upcoming threat before it's too late.

Finally, if the F2Ps get unmuted for one or both ways of communication (commands and voice/text chats), Valve should give an item to all the people that paid to be P2P after the update introduced in 2020. A non-tradable miscellaneous that shows how you were forced to spend money in order to use the tools the game has to work properly."

Coldest Poot
Content Creator

Team Fortress 2: A Landscape Fraught With Conflict

By Military Snake

Truly, I wish this point of deliberation was as easy to talk about as people pretend it is. The idea of something being toxic in this climate of the internet, where dishonest discussion runs rampant and definitions are thrown out for personal gratification, makes it quite difficult to hold a rational conversation about whatever is being deliberated. One of the greatest examples of said cognative dissonance is in regard to "toxicity" in a specific field.

The word "toxic" is defined as containing or being poisonous material especially when capable of causing death or serious debilitation. But within the last ten years or so, the general populous has shifted to using the term in a more colloqueal manner. To describe a person or person's behaviors as toxic is to attribute malice to their attitudes. They are described as being a source of unnecessary negativity and conflict, often manipulating others to appease their desires.

Now, one might wonder upon the reading of these definitions how toxicity can possibly be attributed to something like positivity: something that is inherently good, raising the well-being of whatever it is attributed to.

Indeed, it seems like quite the paradox. Positivity, as understood by the world today, becomes toxic when it is utilized as a means of ignoring or dismissing certain problems, and even going so far as to criticize those who point out said problems. When positivity is leveraged as a tool of manipulation by gaslighting, deceiving, and misconstruing the facts of a certain manner in a positive light, it becomes hazardous to the honesty of a conversation, the culture which surrounds the conversation, and could potentially harm other facets of life with the ripple effects it carries.

In the general online landscape of Team Fortress 2, discussions about every facet of the game are fraught with dishonesty, failure to comprehend the topic being communicated, and blatantly false information that stokes the fires of contempt and bitterness within the community. Yet no conversation, I believe, has more gravitas yet is simultaneously so overlooked and swept under the rug as the discussion of toxic positivity. There are many people who believe that Valve Software has indeed mishandled Team Fortress 2 for a decade at this point, yet there are just as many, if not more, who believe that TF2 is perfectly acceptable the

way it is, and that criticism towards Valve is unwarranted.

But if we look purely at the facts, we see that the dismissal of criticism as a whole is quite the fallacious undertaking. Valve started to mysteriously lose an understanding of the game's art style and gameplay direction as early as 2012, and with the Meet Your Match and Jungle Inferno updates, the game had been all but wasted. An inferior game-finding system reliant on a ranking system that barely works in the first place, map additions even in the holiday updates that are questionable at best, and cosmetics that tarnish the very concept of what Team Fortress 2 once stood for and relied on as its identity: a cooperative first-person shooter designed to facilitate team play around completing objectives in a more palatable and less hardcore execution than tactical shooters like Call of Duty and Counter-Strike. And throughout that decade of mishandling and eventual outright neglect, the game's main game queue system that has been advertised and presented as the primary method of gameplay was infected with cheating bots, programmed to immediately kill anyone in their path and ruining the experience for all players.

For almost an entire decade, the game was left in a state of disrepair and abandon with nothing from Valve except the approval for more maps and hats that continued to bloat the game into a joke every seasonal event. Even when Valve introduced Versus Saxton Hale as an official gamemode and a great deal of praise and hype was generated around a gamemode with a smiling seal, not a single problem that plagued the game had been addressed, adjusted, or removed. In fact, with the muting of Free-To-Play accounts, the problem was made worse, as TF2 became a game you had to spend at least SOME money on just to use basic communication functions, effectively transforming TF2's marketing as a "free-to-play" game as false advertising.

Yet even still, the discourse from the majority of popular YouTubers, Twitter bloggers, and general media output is one of praise towards Valve every time they do something that even casts its glance in the general direction of the game. Praise for the game and thanks towards Valve for making the game is one thing, and that is certainly no shame to partake in. But to pretend as though the game is in a good place compared to what it used to be is absolutely unacceptable and inexcusable. Members of TF2's media, the majority of whom are YouTubers built upon an overly positive image towards the game, do not receive the criticism they deserve for this because it is easier in this case to simply sweep all the issues plaguing the game under

the rug of excuses that sum up to "you're taking it too seriously," or "you're just a hater and a pessimist, lighten up!"

The hardest part of getting Valve to listen to any common sense in regards to their games is that the general populous has a nasty habit of eating itself alive due to the shockingly even numbers of polar opposites in beliefs. There will always be people who disagree and say that TF2 is just fine the way it is, they are part of a toxicly positive mob who insist that there are no problems because it simply doesn't affect them. But matters of personal taste mean nothing when looking at the problems TF2 faces on an objective level. The game is not free to play anymore. Casual servers are inferior to the old Quickplay format that peaked in performance in 2014. Many maps, unusuals and cosmetics ignore the art style of TF2 and cause visual distractions to the player and impedes a fair sense of how the game is to be played. There are objective issues with this game that, regardless of what you personally feel about them, are there and should have the time taken to address and criticize Valve for.

If TF2's health and longevity as a game is to continue, demands must be made of Valve. TF2 is still a game marketed and advertised as actively still under development and still makes Valve more money than most of us will ever see in our lifetimes. This can be leveraged to our, the players', advantage. We can demand that Valve do things that make the game more enjoyable for all, like unmuting Free-To-Play accounts. We can demand that Valve maintain a more fervent adherence to the art style and flow of gameplay that TF2 is built upon and deserves to maintain the integrity of. Because if the game is worth loving as much as those of the toxic positivity mob claim it is, then insistance for the highest level of care the game can possibly receive should be called for. If not, then the game should be left to rot, as it has been for over a decade, and become nothing more than just another microtransaction-infested, bloated and unoptimized piece of slop reserved for the bottom pages of Steam's archives. If the game is to be loved, then I call upon people to act like it and insist that the game be brought back to its former glory. Otherwise, with the way people treat it now, if it is not already, it will simply become just another game.

"Positivity, as understood by the world today, becomes toxic when it is utilized as a means of ignoring or dismissing certain problems, and even going so far as to criticize those who point out said problems."

— Military Snake

LEVEL DESIGN PROFILE:
2FORT
CAPTURE THE FLAG

Map Overview

- Type: Capture the Flag (CTF)
- Setting: Daylight, sunny farmland
- Environment: Two opposing forts separated by a contaminated canal with deep water
- Hazards: Drowning in deep water
- Pyrovision Support: Yes

Layout and Key Areas

- Symmetrical Design: Each team has an identical base, promoting balanced gameplay.
- Central Bridge: A covered bridge spans the canal, serving as a primary combat zone and sniper vantage point.
- Sewers: Underneath the bridge, sewers provide an alternative route into enemy bases, often used for stealthy approaches.
- Battlements: Elevated platforms on each fort offer sniper positions and can be accessed by certain classes using advanced movement techniques.
- Intelligence Room: Located deep within each base, this room houses the team's "Intelligence" briefcase.

Objective

- Teams aim to infiltrate the enemy's base, capture their Intelligence (a briefcase), and return it to their own base. The first team to achieve the set number of captures wins the match.

Fun Fact

- The first iteration of the 2Fort in the Team Fortress series in the original Quakeworld Team Fortress mod released in 1996.

Map Overview

UnmuteF2Ps: An Open Letter to Valve from the TF2 Community

For five years, free-to-play players in Team Fortress 2 have been restricted from using basic communication features on official Valve servers. Recently, a group of community members came together to challenge this restriction, writing an open letter to Valve that advocates for equal communication access for all players, regardless of account status.

While a handful of detractors presented counterarguments, with some just being ragebait or unreasonable arguments, the sentiment among the rest of TF2's playerbase leans in favor of lifting these restrictions.

The open letter was spearheaded by SimplyKat*, the editor-in-chief of this magazine and founder of TF2 Nexus, who collaborated with a diverse group of community members. The people who contributed in writing the letter are DEWILL, Lon'qudor, Xob, Military Snake, Michael, and EmirmikE, with additional revisions by bob_2_. The result was a collective effort that established the foundation of the community's call for free-to-play players to be unmuted and be allowed to use basic communication features regardless of their status.

However, the letter's public release faced a rocky start as the initial post on the r/TF2 subreddit was deleted by the original poster due to some issues with the image's preview, then reposted and subsequently removed by the subreddit's moderators due to rules regarding reposting before ultimately being reinstated. The letter also had to be revised due to some grammatical errors. Despite these challenges, the message spread rapidly, fueled by discussions, videos, and posts on various social media platforms.

Over 2700+ signatures from various community members and content creators were compiled and the letter was then delivered to Valve's HQ. The letter stands not just as a plea for change but as proof that the TF2 community is resilient and can be united. Whether Valve will respond remains to be seen, but one thing is certain: the players' voices have never been louder.

April 3, 2025

To whom it may concern at Valve,

The following is an open letter from the general Team Fortress 2 Community and its free-to-play playerbase.

Teamwork without communication is impossible. Team Fortress 2 is no exception. Since the game's release in October 2007, communication through text chat, voice chat, and voice commands has been integral to TF2 as a team-based first-person shooter. However, in 2020, due to the influx of cheater-bots spamming obscene and discriminatory content in casual servers, a decision was made to restrict free-to-play players from using these communication tools.

While the intent behind this decision was understandable at the time, we believe the long-term effects have been more harmful than helpful. This measure failed to curb many bots' ability to spam while simultaneously punishing new and legitimate players by locking vital and basic game mechanics behind a paywall. Nearly five years later, the restriction persists, even though the bot crisis has largely subsided. This has left free-to-play players voiceless and disconnected in a game that thrives on teamwork and coordination.

Free-to-play players can't coordinate pushes, alert teammates to the presence of Spies and sentries, or even call for a Medic. These actions are essential for meaningful teamwork in a game that features the word "Team" in its title. Silencing free-to-play players creates an uneven playing field where those who paid for premium have a direct advantage over those who did not. This compromises the game's core design philosophy.

Additionally, the current system encourages an exclusionary environment that may discourage new players from contributing fully to the game. When a new player joins TF2, they are introduced to a game that is advertised as team-based, but they cannot communicate with their team unless they pay. Denying new players the ability to participate in any kind of teamwork keeps them on the outside looking in and hampers their ability to learn, grow, and appreciate the game. This results in many new players leaving the game entirely before they even have the opportunity to enjoy TF2 as it was designed to be played. This defies the concept of TF2 being "free-to-play" in its truest sense.

There is little to no evidence that these limitations have resulted in a safer or more enjoyable space for TF2; instead, bot hosters found ways for their bots to spread spam through easily-obtained premium accounts. Instead, restricting free-to-play communication has only alienated and silenced players who may have otherwise added a positive contribution to the community. It is clear that muting free-to-play players has not solved the issue of discriminatory content or spam, but has only hurt a significant portion of the playerbase.

The muting of free-to-play players is a relic of TF2's past. It briefly served a purpose in the midst of the bot crisis, but that crisis has long ended. What is left is an outdated restriction that prevents communication and inhibits teamwork: two pillars upon which TF2 was built.

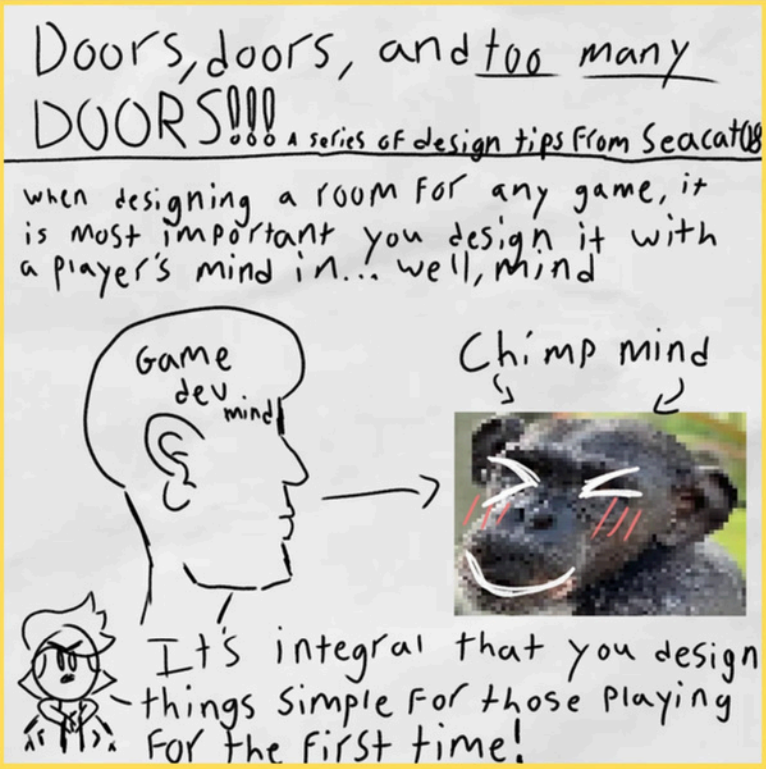
For the reasons stated above, the Team Fortress 2 community, respectfully asks that the five-year muting of free-to-play players which prevents them from using voice chat, text chat, and voice commands be lifted. Let all players regardless of their account status experience TF2 as it was intended: a game where communication is key and where every voice matters.

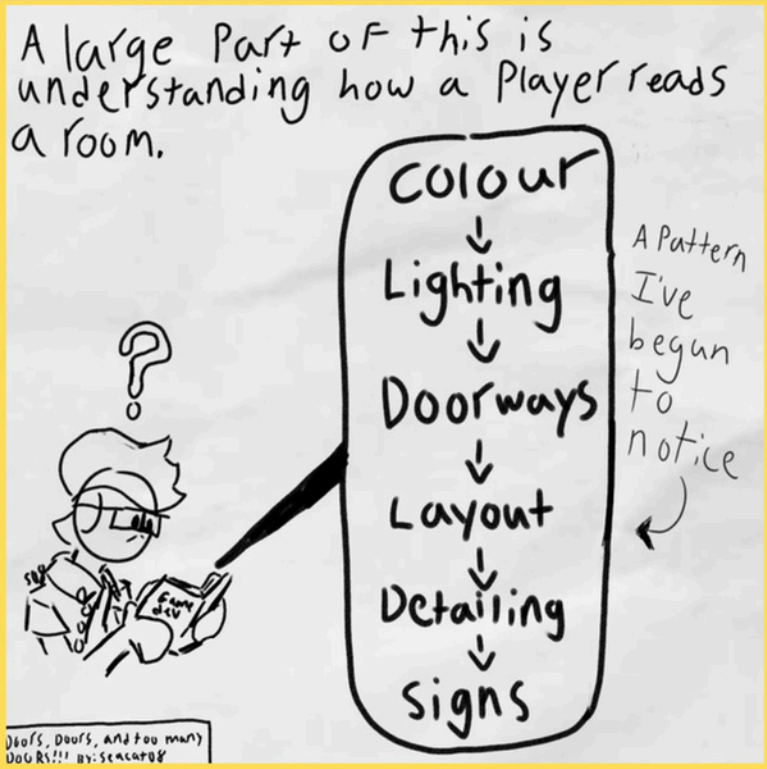
Thank you for your time and consideration.

Random Notes

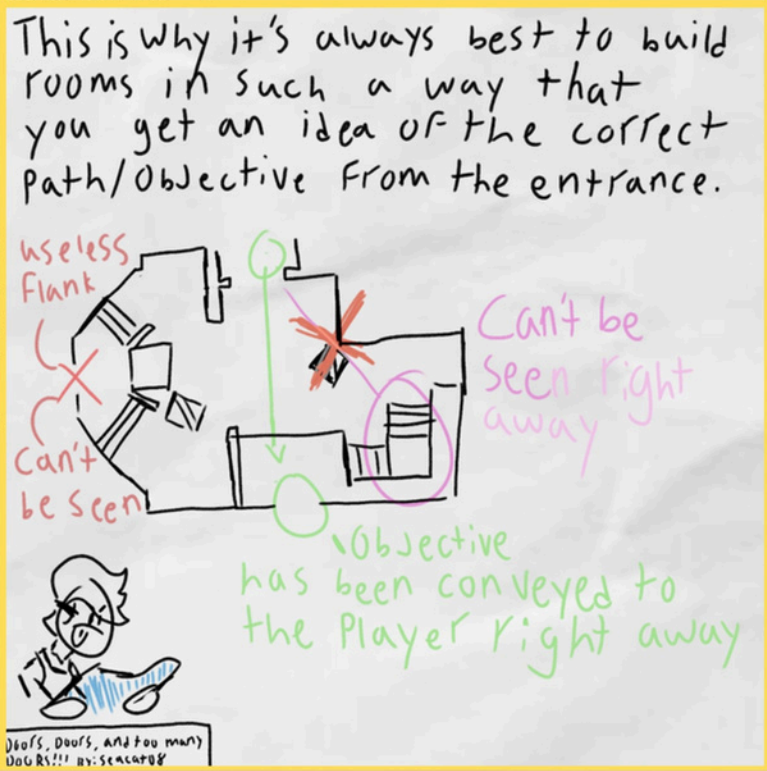
Doors, doors, and too many DOORS!!!*

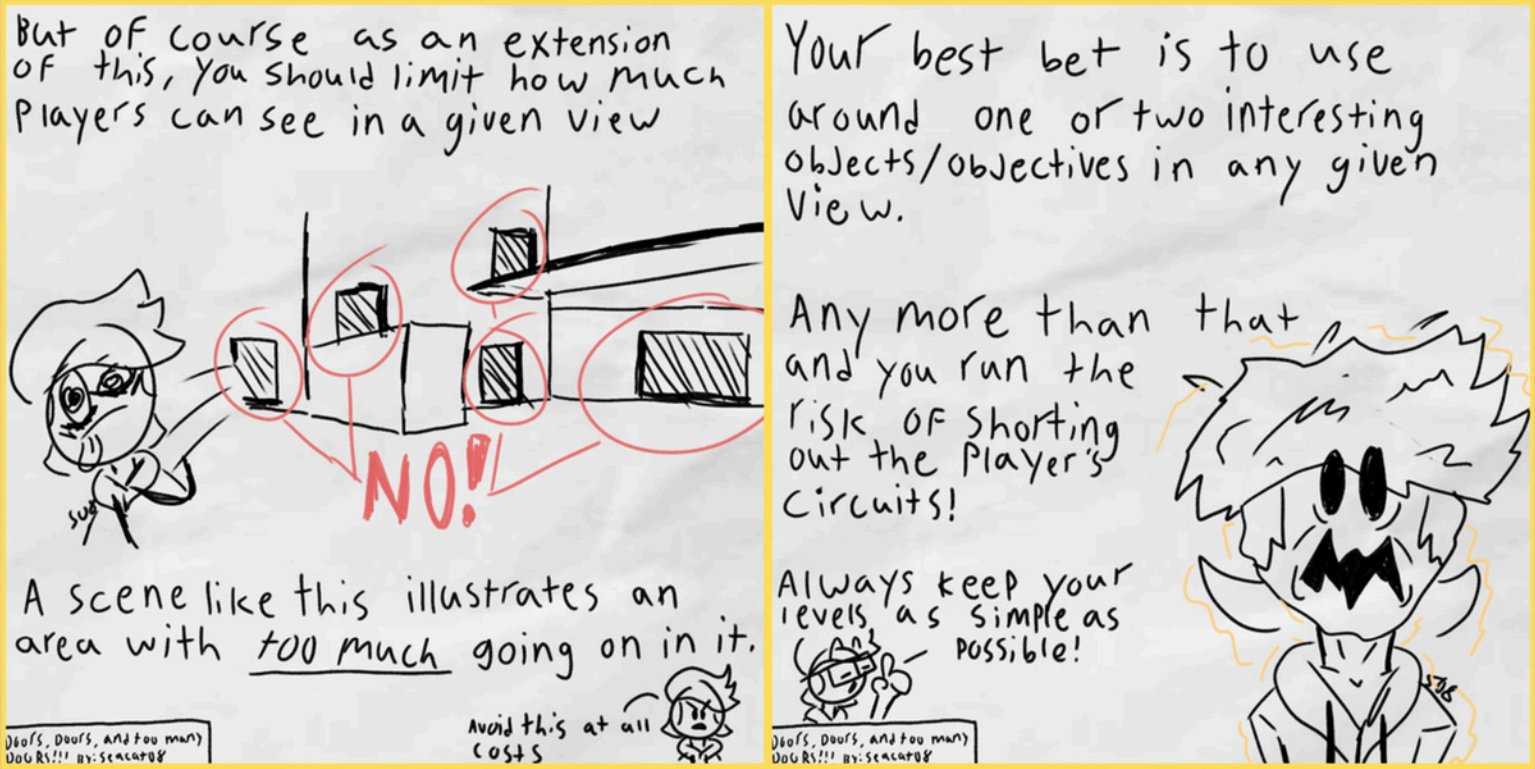
By Seacat08


Doors, doors, and too many DOORS!!!
A series of design tips from Seacat08
when designing a room for any game, it is most important you design it with a player's mind in... well, mind
Game dev mind
Chimp mind
It's integral that you design things simple for those playing for the first time!



I've found through experience that Players alway look For doors before analyzing the layout.
Free Money
This is especially true For frantic First Person shooters like
TEAM FORTRESS 2
Doors, Doors, and too many DOORS!!! By: Seacat08


This is why it's always best to build rooms in such a way that you get an idea of the correct path/objective From the entrance.
useless Flank
Can't be seen
Can't be seen right away
Objective has been conveyed to the Player right away
Doors, Doors, and too many DOORS!!! By: Seacat08


But of course as an extension of this, you should limit how much players can see in a given view
NO!
A scene like this illustrates an area with too much going on in it.
Avoid this at all costs
Your best bet is to use around one or two interesting objects/objectives in any given view.
Any more than that and you run the risk of shorting out the player's circuits!
Always keep your levels as simple as possible!
And that's the keyword to fix most game design woes.
keep it...
Simple
Thanks for coming to my TED talk!!!
Of course this won't apply to all styles of game and you're free to break the mold if it does it well for the game feel
But is just some tips from my experience that I find helps!

***Post originally from Bluesky**
https://bsky.app/profile/seacat08.bsky.social/post/3lkk4wiw7jk2d

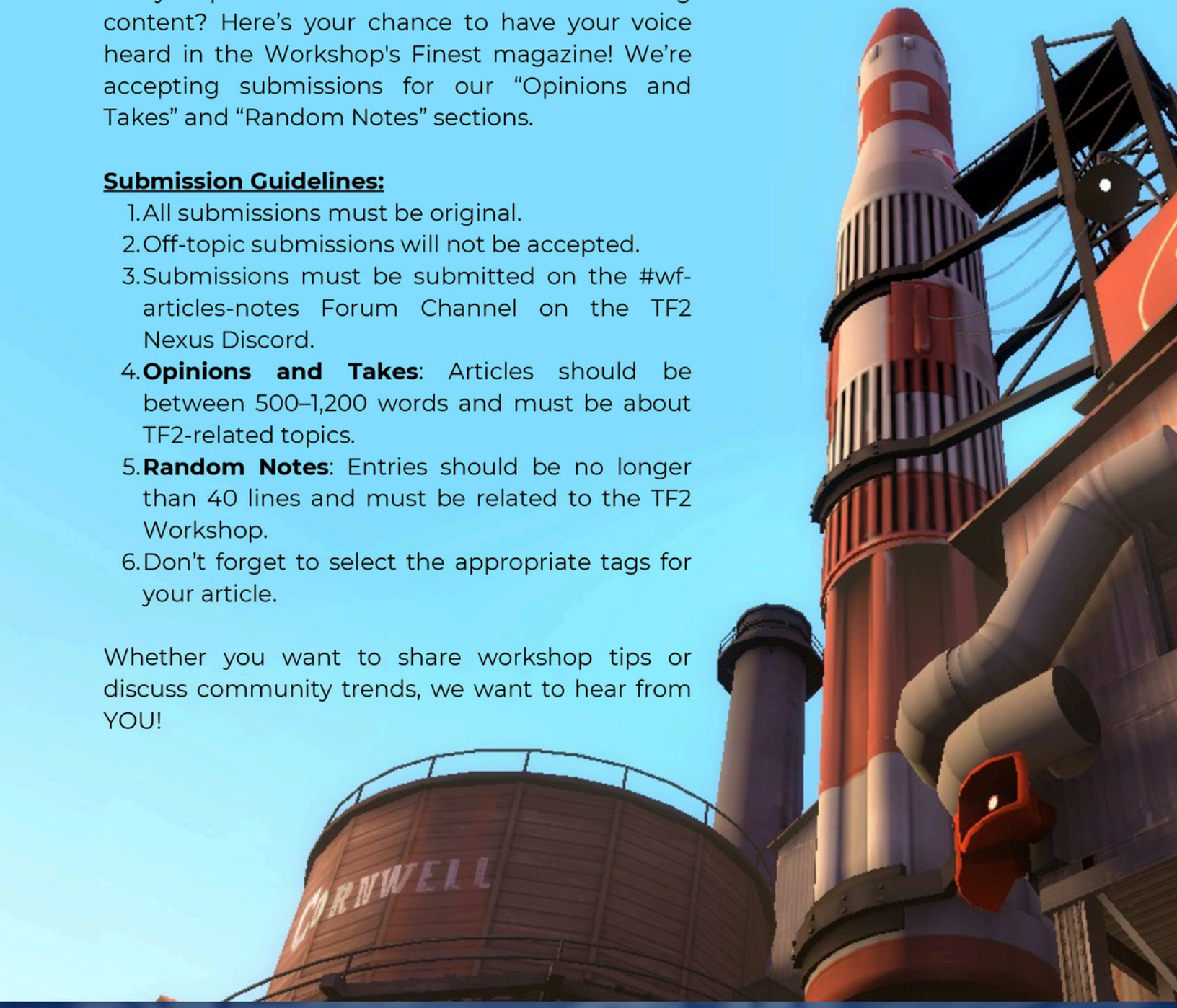
A Call for submissions!

Are you passionate about TF2 and love creating content? Here's your chance to have your voice heard in the Workshop's Finest magazine! We're accepting submissions for our "Opinions and Takes" and "Random Notes" sections.

Submission Guidelines:

1. All submissions must be original.
2. Off-topic submissions will not be accepted.
3. Submissions must be submitted on the #wf-articles-notes Forum Channel on the TF2 Nexus Discord.
4. **Opinions and Takes**: Articles should be between 500–1,200 words and must be about TF2-related topics.
5. **Random Notes**: Entries should be no longer than 40 lines and must be related to the TF2 Workshop.
6. Don't forget to select the appropriate tags for your article.

Whether you want to share workshop tips or discuss community trends, we want to hear from YOU!



Brought to you by the TF2 Players, for the TF2 Players.

TF2 Nexus is the place for TF2 Community Members who are interested in making content for the game to gather, create ideas, and share their creations with others.

Workshoppers, artists, modders, and ordinary players are all welcome here!

@TF2Nexus

.gg/FpHdrG3hcz